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SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN VIEWS ON US-EGYPT STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

Classified by Ambassador Francis Ricciardone for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: On July 5, Ambassador, DCM, and EconCouns met with Minister for Foreign Affairs Aboul Gheit to discuss preparations for the US-Egyptian Strategic Dialogue meetings in Washington. Aboul Gheit had met the previous day with the Prime Minister and other cabinet members to prepare for the talks. The GOE agrees to the executive session, lunch and plenary and propose a press conference to follow. They prefer three working group sessions: political, economic, and security. The Egyptian delegation will arrive on July 17 and Aboul Gheit will remain through July 19. He confirmed that if there is Pentagon representation, a senior Egyptian military official will also join the delegation. He proposed to use the visit of NEA A/S Welch and DNSA Abrams on July 11-12 to announce the Strategic Dialogue. On his own account, he requested bilateral meetings for himself with NSC Advisor Hadley, DNI Negroponte and USUN Ambassador Bolton. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Egyptian Delegation: The minister confirmed that he would lead the Egyptian delegation, which will include Omar Soliman, Minister of Trade Rachid plus two or three advisors, a senior military official, and Minister for International Cooperation Fayza Abulnaga. He did not know who would accompany the other principals, but intends to bring from MFA Assistant Minister for American Affairs Salama Shaker, Assistant Minister for African Affairs Mohammed Higazi, and an expert on UN reform. He hinted that the MOD was uncomfortable creating a parallel track to the MCC, but said Minister of Defense Tantawi had agreed to send a senior Egyptian general, provided there was senior Pentagon representation. Aboul Gheit requested a speedy response on who would attend the senior and working level meetings on the US side.

¶3. (SBU) Format: Responding to the U.S. proposal on format, Aboul Gheit said that the Egyptians accepted the proposal of a 30 minute, principals plus ambassadors meeting followed by lunch and then the plenary. He proposed a Press Conference to follow the plenary. Aboul Gheit does not plan to attend any of the committee (working group) meetings, but would not speak for his fellow Egyptian principals.

¶4. (C) At the principals' level, Aboul Gheit volunteered that the Egyptian delegation would be prepared to discuss any topic, including democratic reform; he specifically proposed that principals discuss: combating extremism in the region, the question of the US image abroad and Egypt's image in Washington. He suggested that issues such as UN cooperation and Africa were important but could be handled at the working level. He hoped that NSC Advisor Hadley, Ambassador Negroponte, and senior reps from DOD and CIA would join the principals' meetings on the US side.

¶5. (SBU) Breakout sessions: The Egyptians propose three working group sessions: political, economic, and security. MFA would lead the political; Min Trade would the economic

and EGIS Chief Soliman's staff and the Egyptian military representative would lead the security on the Egyptian side. Again, stressing that everything is on the table, Aboul Gheit suggested that Egyptian democratic reform issues would be best discussed in the privacy of lunch. "The working level experts (on the Egyptian side) will have no influence on these issues."

¶6. (SBU) After the press conference, Aboul Gheit suggested that the Egyptian ministers would pursue their own bilateral meetings. He requested assistance in scheduling bilateral meetings with NSA Hadley, DNI Negroponte, and USUN Amb Bolton. He said that he would also seek meetings on Capitol Hill and would also be available on the morning of July 18, prior to the formal talks. He intends to leave Washington on the evening of July 19.

¶7. (SBU) Min Trade aide, Tamer Mostafa separately told DCM that he has requested that the Egyptian Embassy also request bilateral meetings with Secretary Gutierrez and USTR Schwab on behalf of Trade Minister Rashid.

¶8. (C) Press: Aboul Gheit proposed to announce the Strategic Dialogue to the press during the July 11-12 visit to Cairo of A/S Welch and DNSA Elliott Abrams. He suggested that the announcement should reference previous agreements with Secretaries Powell and Rice, to conduct strategic dialogues.

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The GOE is willing to consider a communique.

¶9. (C) Aboul Gheit pressed hard for a swift response on these proposals and requested a draft agenda for both the principals' and working group meetings at the earliest possible opportunity.

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